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EAST TIMOR - PHYSICAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGOUS GENOCIDE

INTRODUCTION

East Timor is a Portuguese ex colony that from 1975 onwards has hed its population reduced to about one third by war and famine.

It is a people whose right to seld-determination was recognised by the United Nations, but it is also a people voted to isolation and almost forgotten. Neither the extreme violence of the repression it has been subjected to or the determination of its struggle for survival have aroused the conscience of the international community.

It is a tortured people, being violated by the Indonesian regime, not allowed to have its own language and culture, but steel fihting for its existance as a people, in spite of the dispropostion of means. It is necessary to look back in order to understand the present situation.

Located at the South-East point of the small island of Sonda and at the Northe--West of Australia. The island of Timor was shared back in the XVII century between the Dutch (West Timor, 13455 km2) and the Portuguese (East-Timor 18989 Km2, Ocussi--Ambeno 2461 Km2 and the little islands of Autaüri e Jaco 144 km2),

The island of Timor is a mountainous one Ramelau reaching of 2960m. Though it probably hides copper even oil, these have not yet been explored. Up to 1975 the main product was coffee (80% of exports).

Due to the raising of cattle and the traditional form of agriculture there was no famine amongst the population although the level of life was low.

In 1970 the population of East Timor was estimated at 609,000 (in 1975 it was estimated to be 680,000).

It is formed by various ethnie groups (31 ethneic-linguistic groups according to H.E. Felgas) mixed with pop-lation originally from Portugal, Goa, Macau, and some thousands of China.

Athough all the population spoke Portuguese the usual language used amongst the various groups was 'tetum' and not the Indonesian 'bahasa', the oficial language in West-Timor

Religiously, the majority of East Timor's population was animist, about 200,000 catholics and 2,400 protestants, this situation is due to over 4 centuries of Portuguese presence. On the contrary, in West-Timor and Indonesian, islamism is clearly predominant.

A short History

The portuguese arrival at the small islands of Sonda around the year 1520 and the firts permanent sttlers in Timor were the Dominican missions. A century later the Dutch greed the portuguese out of the majority of these islands and in 1651 captural the citadel of Kupany in the west part of Timor, from the onwards occuping the west part of the island. The Portuguese kept their sovereignty of the East part

Whoever goes through the history of Timor is soon acquainted with all the conspiracy of the 'house of Camenasse', the general uprising of 1729/31, the war of Luca, the riots of Lacto and Ulmera, of Contubaba and Cová, the wars of Manufahi. All these were signs of the powerful dinamism of a sociaty in permanent shock

with the colonialism to which it was submitted.

The Portuguese governments always showed very little interest for this far away colony, no effort was made to develop its potentials.

From the administrative point of view, the traditional chiefs were kept (liurai) but with very limited powers.

The Catholic Church though its missions and with its schools and seminarys because the most significant european presence, influencing the cultural life of the people of Timor.

In 1951 Timor was declared an overseas province and in 1953 the Portugese nationality is given to all natures of East Timor. In 1972 the province becomes an "autonomous region" with an electal parliament. Due to the dictatorial character of the Portuguese regime, this right was essentialy theorical.

From 1961 onwards Portugal has problems in Angola, Moçambique and Guiné with the rising of movements towards independence.East Timor that nobody claims is of no concern to Portugal. In that same year, the Indonesian Minister for foreign affairs declared in the United Nations general assembly that "in what concerns Timor we have no territorial claims".

On the 24th of March 1973 the Portuguese political police (PIDE) closes down a priest newspaper called "SEARA" edited in Dili, in which a group of young Timorese had sumwared public attention to their regular column in that newspaper.

The few Timorese that studied in Portugal at that time (about 39)were aware of the struggles for independence taking place in the other Portuguese colonies. These youngsters were preparing themselves to assume later the responsability for the running of their country, but would soon find themselves involved in a real tragedy.

THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION AND THE SITUATION IN EAST TIMOR

The 25th of April 1974 ended the fascist regime in Portugal and the colonial war, opening the way to decolonisation. Yet Timors' problems seemed less urgent; due to the fact that leberation never took place there.

Three political parties are formed in 1974:

- (UDT) Timor Democratic Union.Who's leader are either civil servants or land-owners, "established" people, favourable ro the continuation of political words with Portugal through the form of a federation.
- (ASDT) Social Democratic Association of Timor that four months later will name itself FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front of Independent East-Timor) claims independence, the immediate participation of the people of Timor in the administration and the end of racial discrimination.
- (APODETI) Popular Democratic Association of Timor. This party seeks the association of East Timor with Indonesia, with the status of an autonomous province.

UDT which has several influencial members develops rapidly in the busy areas but does not reach the people in the rural areas.

FRETILIN, on the other hand, sarts compaings against illiteracy and teches modern agricultural methods, also proposes an agrariam reform and the setting up of co-operations. Through these improvements they rapidly outstride the UDT as the leading party . In February 1975, R.Osborne, the Australian observer considered that 60% of the population supported Fretilin and that this tendency was on the rise.

For a brief period of time there existed an alliance between UDT and FRETILIN both agreeing on an automanous project for East Timor., APODETI being excluded as it had such limited representation. However, after a visit to Jacarta by its leaders

UDT broke with FRETILIN causing a dangerous division among the people of East Timor.

On the 11th August 1975 UDT occupied strategic positions in Dili and other localities and demanded that the Portuguese Government arrest and imprison the FRETILIN leaders. The Timorese soldiers abandoned this barracks either to join UDT or FRETILN but mainly to join the ranks of the latter.

The Portuguese governor along with the civilians and military personell abandon the area while UDT and FRETILIN become involved in a civil war which according to Australian Consul I. Dunn ends at the beginning of September with victory for FRETILIN which now controls the inhole territory. Victor after three weeks fighting, FRETILIN accepts the Portuguese proposals.

The Australian Consul I. Dunn confirms the popularity of the FRETILIN leaders and also comments on the integrity with which these governed.

Meanwhile, UDT troops along with APODETI an Indonesian supporters caused incidents on the occidental border in October.

The ministers for foreign affairs of Portugal and Indonesia met in Rome between the 1st and 3rd of November and agreed in a communiqué that it was Portugal's responsability as the only legitimate authority to see that a rapid fulfilment of self determination was achieved.

A few days later, however, the Indonesian navy bombarded the town of Atabae (14th November) and moved troops in from the occidental part of the border without any reaction from Portugal.

For this reason and also because Portugal refuses to discuss independence while UDT and APODETI leaders are in Indonesia as refugees, FRETILIN declared independenc on the 28th November. Meanwhile UDT and APODETI declare integration with Indonesia.

The Portuguese government refuses to recognise either declaration and reafirms the Portuguese position as administry power.

The Indonesian confirms "its respect for the Portuguese rights and duties, the only legitimate authority in the territory " but at the same time declares its "profound understanding for the majority parties wish for integration with Indonesia.

THE INDONESIAN INVASION

On the 6th December 1975, Presidente Ford and secretary of state Henry Kissinger of the USA paid a visit to Jacarte. They gave thei agreement for the invasiton of East Timor by Indonesia and 12 hours after their departure the Indonesians invaded with disproportionate forces.

The horrors practised by the troops when occupying by force the capital of Dili are a clear sign of the genocide to come.

In a report published by J. Dunn, Australian Consul during the 1960th and president of the Human Rights Council in Australia and based on several eye witnesses who were intervewed in Lisbon on January 1977, one woman confirms "saw the women shot dead despite having raised their arms by Indonesian parachutists near the Churc next the troops ordered all women found near the church to enter. At nine in the morning these people received orders to march to the docks where there were already 27 women, some Chinese, somo Timorese. She said many of the women had small children with them and they were all crying. The Indonesian take the children from the mothe and gave them to the crowd. Next the xomen were shoot one by one. THe soldiers gave orders to count the dead.

At 2 p.m. 59 men, Chinese and Timorese were taken to the docks. One was X whose widow, according to the eye-witness is now living in Australia. These men were all shot one by one. Once again they counted the dead and she calculated around 500. The victims were force to stand at the edge of the dock so that their bodies fell on into the water. When any gave sign of life the troops find into the water. Many peopl

bagged to be spared but in vain. Another eye witness said that the next day the bodies were washed up on the shore, in front of the bishop house, the Timorese were ordered to remove the bodies. The witness confirmed that the executions continued."

A Catholic priest writes about same subject in November, 1977 in a letter smuggled out of East Timor:

"From the 7th December 1975 till February 1976 the 23 warships anchored in Dili harbour, bombarded the hills surrounding the city during 24 hours a day. (helicopters 8 - 12) planes (4) flew over Timor. On land there was numerous tanks, armoured cars, there are at least 50.000 (not certain)."

Despite this show of force Indonesia tried to affirm that the atack had not been made by its army but by volunteers who wanted integration and therefore the Indonesian Govenment could not stop the fighting.

After the massive invasion of 7th December, 1975 Portugal broke off diplomatic relations with Indonesia and appeals ro the Security Council of the United Nations. The General Assembly voted 69 votes against 11 with 38 abstentions a motion inviting Indonesia to withdraw its armed forces immediately. Several days later (22nd December) the security council unanimously requested Indonesia to remove its armed forces. Indonesia complete-y ignored those motions or any that followed, that were approved in the UN (April and November 1976, December 1977, 1978, November1979 October, 1980, 1981).

In May 1976, in the presence of carefully chosen newspapermen on the first visit to Dili since the invasion and in front of a popular assembly of 28 people nominated by themselves, the APODETI leader G.A. Gonçalves asked Indonesia to integrate Timor Oriental without further delay, which was done on the 17th July by decision of the Indonesian Parliament.

WAR AND GENOCIDE THROUGH STARNATION

During three years (1076-1979) the world remained ignorant of what was happening in East Timor. Nobody, not even the international Red Cross had permission to enter Timorese territory. Even Kurt Waldeim's representative was forbidden ro visit areas controlled by FRETILIN.

Even with its powerfully equipped war machine Indonesia met with unexpected resistance from the baddly armed 700,000 Timorese. After the inicial invasion followed by barberian crimes, mass executions etc. the majority of the people took refuge in the mountains under FRETILIN's protection.

A Portuguese missionary (P. Leoneto do Rego) who spent almost three years with FRETILN people requesting repatriation for healthe reasons tell us that during the first depite the presence of 30.000 Indonesian troops and the constant attacks (1975, November 1976, May 1977) the people resisted successfully. At the beginning of 1977 the Indonesian Minister for foreign affaires cinically declared "We have killed between 60.000 and 80.000 Timorese but we have liberated 600.000 more".

The war intensified in December 1976 "the planes fly over all day, there are hundreds of dead. The bodies are food for the vultures . When the people aren't killed by bullets they die of epidemics, which wipe out entire villages. The war is going in to the third year and there is no sign of an end for it. "The barbarieties understandable in the stone ages " the crueltees, the robbery, the fising squal without motive, are make up part of daily life in Timor. Insecurity is total and teror of being im-risoned is parte of daily life". (letter from a catholic priest, November 1977).

In 1977 the Indonesian start their systematic destruction of crops in the mountain regions, thus foreing the population to come down to the occupied territory.

Hunger becomes the principle enemy of the Timorese. After beginning of 1978 the situation becomes drastic. The exhausted starning people who came down from the

mountain areas were regrouped in camps controlled by the Indonesians but their luck did not change.

For Elizabeth Traude, an anthropologist from Harward, who lived for over two years in East Timor, the camps controlled by Indonesian represent a rupture from the traditional habits and have nothing to do with the normal pattern of life of the Indonesia. The war is a cataclysm for the people".

In a text published in 1981 in the USA by A. Cohen and Roberta Quance, one can read: " It is admittede by the state department the existance of 150 camps controlled by the Indonesians. There are over 30.000 people l-ving in the camps".

In September, 1978 a carefully chosen group of diplomats and jornalists visited East Timor at the invitation of Indonesia. Despite the "guidal tour" the canadian Ambassador declared to reporters that the people they had seen in the village of Remexio were in a deplorable condition. In many cases dying of hunger, desperately ill and in nedd of immediate help, food, clothing and basic medical assistance." The diplomats raise the cry of claim: more than 100.000 people are on starnation level.

According to local priests who gave assistance to the population in one district they estimated that 500 people would die every month of hunger.

A report from the church in Indonesia in 1979, referred to a centre near Maubisse, which was pratically without food and had for medicine 300 cloroquine pills and five metros of bandage.

From the same source in Ermera at least 300 people would die each month due to the conditions (these declarations were made in Lisbon 1981 by J. Dunn at the Permanent Peoples Tribunal) .

The violence of the invadors is indescribable and it is very difficult to penetrat the isolation. Because of this a clandestine document which had been written in 1981 only became public in 1982. The document entitled "Report from Capture Babylon" relates:

"On the 23rd November, 1978 on the mountain of Uadaboro, situated on the eastern parte of East Timor, 500 people were machine gunned to death, including pregant women and children of all ages. This massacre took place after the Indonesian troops convinced the people that they had merely came to give them assistance".

Those Timorese who resisted with arms disappeared immediately, "for example, shot dead and then dropped by helicopter into the sea with wei-hts on their feet. Violation of women in front of their men followed by shootig of both". The tortures are numerous, varying between red-hot iron and electric chairs, cigarrette burns and razor slashes. The burns are done on all parts of the body, principally on the sexual organs. If the victim is a woman also on the breast. There are still alive today several people carying those scars."

Through a letter dated January 1981, and sent out illegaly an eye witness recalls, "the war wontinues in all its violence but without bombardments, because of the presence of the International Red Cross. From the 10th June 1980, the prisons have been completely full; Ataúro has become a prison colony for political and its inhabitants deported to concentration camps of Ataúro. The population is being desimated by hunger and sickness The people concentrated near The administrative areas are forbidden to culturate or take care of their animals. Consequently, they are at the mercy of the Indonesians for food, clothing and medicine... The Indonesians distribute food and clothing provided by the International Red Cross or the A.C.R.S. as though it were coming directly from them. The assistance is not free and only given to those who accept Indonesia.

The people die but dont surrender to the invador. For three years they have demonstrated their wish to be free. From the 1st January 1981 every civil servant who did not assume Indonesian nationality lost his job. These people prefer to they of

hunger rather then submit to Indonesian tyranny. The rest of the people by force of circunstance accepted nationality but only on the exterior-deep down they desire feedom to continue as Timorese.

All movements are controlled by the armed forces, and many times the more single are obliged to pay dues along the way till they reach their destination. Life is very expensive due to rampant cooruption and exploration. Outside travel is forbidden and only through bribery can anyone get an exit permit. All correspondence is opened and censored. Freedom of speach or meeting in groups is forbidden. Torture in the prisons is barberous specially in relation to women and young girls. Expropriation of private property, jewells, cafe, commercial products, wood, etc. is normal, the Timorese who has a coffe plantation is forbidden to sell his product, as it is considered property of the invador.

In 1981 the Indonesians launched a "pacification compaign" in which 50.000 Timorese were obliged to take part as a human sield for the advancing of Indonesian troops.

INDONESIAN REFUSAL OF OUTSIDE HELP

Indonesia refused all outside of offer of help for the Timorese. Only in 1979 was the American Catholic Relief Service (ACRS) and the International Red Cross through the Indonesian Red Cross allowed access. The America director of ACRS said that the degree of malnutrition was the wast he had seen in 14 years of work. The The jesuil priest P. Raper from Australia, said that half the allowance given is taken by the Indonesian army to cost transport expenses, etc. Besides this, a great part of the money is used by the military for their own personel gain. 70% of the products are waylaid and sold to the population. (document July, 1981) .

In July 1979 the delegates of CICV visited thirteen villages with 75.000 inhabitants. They testified that 60.000 were in alarming state of malnutrition, and 20.-00 would die of hunger. CICV didn't visit the places indicated by the church as being the worst.

It shoul be recalled that it is Indonesia that decided where and when the help can be given, which means that no help can reach the places outise Indonesian control.

The report referred to affirms that the Red Cross has its base in Dili and rarely visits the interior. The same report says even when the population know that they are not receiving what is due they cannot complain for fear of being shot."

CULTURAL GENOCIDE

P. Leoneto do Rego delcare during the session dedicated to East Timor held in Lisbon, 1981 : Between East Timor and Indonesia there are profound divergences, cultural, moral and religious. The people of East Timor have nothing in common with the Indonesian people, the differences lie in the costums, the language, the religion and moral.

Despite for centuries of colonial rule the Timorese kept their own language - Tetum. However, the Indonesian Govenment wishes to substitute Tetum for the Indonesian language. The Timorese have their own culture and traditions and as their religion is by tradition animist, they accept the catholic religion because it helped to perfect the animist cult, principally wheb referring to the cult of death.

The violation of the grams by the Indonesian troops, to steal valuable objects is one of the aspects which has shocked profoundly the Timorese.

Indonesia press on the Timorese its customs and traditions, sending teacher to Jacarte for re-education. Closes schools, systematically violates the cultural values of Esat Timor.

We can read in a letter from a catholic priest dated November, 1977 "A large number of missions have no priests. The shcools have been closed for a period of two years. With this change the Indonesian have opened cabarets and brothels."

or "In the las days there have been many imprisonments of teachers in Bacau--Fatumaca. (Art and training school).

Indonesia has programmed the elimination of the educated class and after five years of ocupation studies are limited to SMP)less the 11 plus) . The reason given being to avoid creating an elite in East Timor.

Recently another report dated July 1981, relates: at Uatolari in the province of Viqueque, schoolboys were murdered in front of their families who where forbidden to weet or wourn the dead children.

The genocide is total, the population is disappéaring along with its culture. Humanity becomes poor.

Bruno Pistocchi, former missionary in East Timor relates that in Kalicai, one of the Makassae centres which he knew well and where he wrote the grammer and where he found the most beautiful Makassae poems, 50 people were murdered in 15 days. In this way 75.000 people will quickly disappear in a short time. It is a part of humanity which will vanish forever . We know all about Athens, its history has been transmitted to us, Parthenon tells us the strong but from Kalicae, Baguia, Baucau, Uatolari, Ossu, there will be no stori. There will be no trace of history faith or spirit which was transmitted through dance, poetry,"ratalolo" (stories told by the elders) witnesses to the richness of their culture. The Timore reverate the old who are the books of the community, the educators of the young, the history and geography books: In resume, the continuation of the past."

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

In their thirst for destruction the Indonesian army did not spare the church or even try to hide the massacres.

The priest who wrote in November 1977, remebers that the bishops residence in Oe-Cusse was destroyed by fire, the seminary of Dare was also destroyed along with the catholic schools.

Timor was not integrated, it was annexed. It was not liberated from Communism (as Indonesia suggeted).

P. Leoneto Rego says: "the churches and seminaries were pillaged, all the books burned. When the houses had nothing of value the soldiers robbed the grams of foreignen and wealhy Timorese." The church has patticipated in the suffering of the people, been humiliated by the invadors. Many priests continued their work, specially in the interior. P. L. de Rego tells, " We were six priests in the FRETILIN area, two of us Timorese. We had freedom to continue our pastoral activities.

The Apostolic administrator of Dili, Monsenhor da Costa Lopes, declared on Radio NDR (West-Germany) in 1980: "The war continues and the fighting goes in Iospalos FRETILIN refuses to collaborate with Indonesia. The FRETILIN figthers have a catolic upGrowing and background. They went through our schools, they fight for our independence."

These declaration were made in front of two Indonesian army officers as is demanded when any contact is made with the outside. The priest's work is controlled by the invadors, the church is the only organisation in Timor which is allowed to function and the little news chich we have is through the church. The Timorese attribute to the church a great importance.

"There are priests who with great courage worked and faced the enemies' guns. According to Father Patrick Walsh the number of catholics rose from 30% to 50% since 1975. This convertion to Catholicism besides other reasons is clearly a search for security and protection."

The Indonesian compaign to convert the Timorese to Islam has met without success. A letter written by a priest in November 1977, says "Freedom is a word without meaning. The freedom proclaimed by Indonesia means enslavement. Timor has returned to the years 1945-195o. The anti-communism is an Islamic slogan . The Indonesians are doing their utmost to wipe out the catholicism in Timor, and many people are afraid that the church will be abolished have in attempt to implant islamism, the Indonesians use the bribary of food and cothing to thief and convert the population.

In this context the churchs' role es even more important, locally and abroad. Despite the courage and risks taken daily by many priests when working for the population, the appeals send abroad don't always have the response expected.

Letter from a Catholic priest November 1977: "Do something concrete for the freedom of the Timorese. The world ignores us and this is unbelievable, we are on the road to total genocide".

Slowly the world and the whurches have begun to realize what is happening in East Timor. Today one begins to hear voices raised, calling for justice and freedom for the Timore, opressed during 400 years of Portuguese colonislism and decimated by the Indonesian regime

The American newspaper "Los Angeles Times" said in an edition in January 1982: "A Timorese priest was threatened when he made declarations to the American Congress, alerting the congress of what was happening in East Timor. Amnesty International and the church is East Timor requested that foreign agencies be present in the territory to guarentee some protection for the population."

Also in Australia which has great responsibility in the area there are the same worries. Camberra Times published in Sydny 1982: " The Director of the SCA M, Michael Whiteley said "we want to aleviate the suffering of the people of East Timor and we don't understand why the Indonesian Government refuses entry to an Australian delegation. It seams that the authorities are determinedt to cover up the truth about the actuel situation in East Timor".

Monsehor Costa Lopes declares in a letter to Caritas (Australia) in November 1981 , that the "Pacification operations" of June and September left the territory vayed as through by a cyclone."

"Hunger is rumpant once again. These men return to the fields too weak to work" Many of those killed during the operations were pregnant women and young children whose only crime was to desire freedom."

Lisbon, May 1982.

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